

# Dr. Strangesample

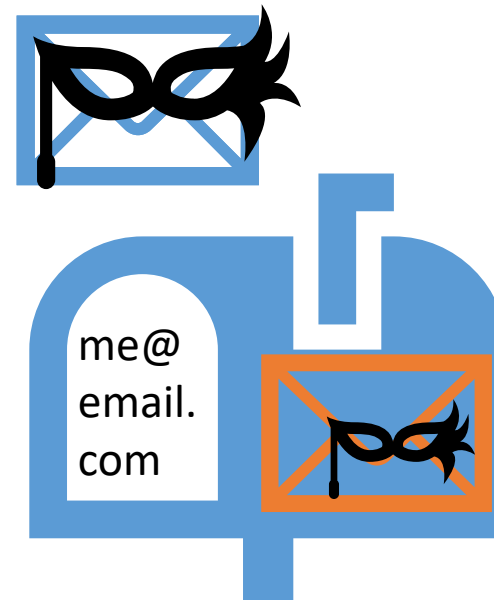
## Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying And Love Alias Email Addresses

Alfred “Dave” Tuttle and Casey Eggleston  
U.S. Census Bureau  
DC-AAPOR Review Preview Conference  
September 16, 2025



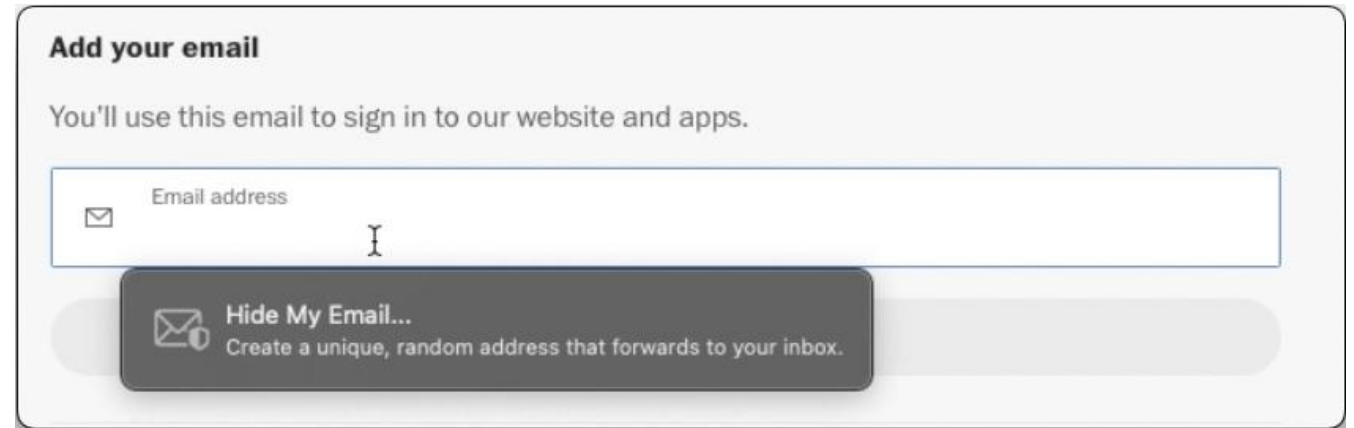
# What is an alias email address?

- Email users can hide or change their addresses.
  - Responses to alias addresses are forwarded to the users.
- Reasons:
  - Protecting privacy
  - Improving inbox organization
  - Filtering spam emails
  - Etc.
- Focus on two types:
  - Masked addresses
  - Modified addresses

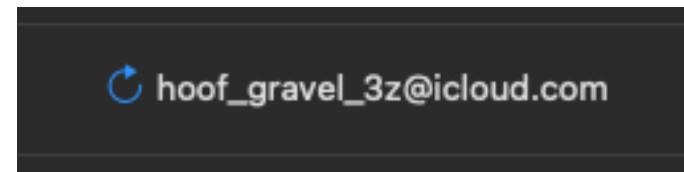


# Masked address

- iCloud can automatically create new addresses (Hide My Email)
  - Combinations of random words and characters
- Keeps the real email address private.



The screenshot shows a light gray rounded rectangle titled "Add your email". Below the title is the text "You'll use this email to sign in to our website and apps." There is a white input field with the placeholder text "Email address" and a small envelope icon on the left. A cursor is visible in the input field. Below the input field is a dark gray button with a white envelope icon and the text "Hide My Email... Create a unique, random address that forwards to your inbox."




The screenshot shows a dark gray rounded rectangle containing a blue circular refresh icon followed by the text "hoof\_gravel\_3z@icloud.com".

# Modified address


- Gmail and other services allow users to modify their existing addresses on the fly.
  - Add “+” and other text
- Makes it easier to find emails from specific senders.

## SET UP AN ACCOUNT

[Log In](#)[Set Up an Account](#)



davetuttle+aapor@email.com



your password

Enter your first name

Enter your last name

# For your consideration

- Should we care about alias email addresses?
- What did we do?
  - Compared responses from alias and non-alias email addresses from two surveys
- What did we learn?
  - Potential differences in response behaviors and demographic characteristics



# The current study

- Household Pulse Survey (HPS)
  - Web-based monthly household survey, n = 50K – 60K per cycle
  - Recruiting question: Participate in future surveys?
- Census Bureau Research Panel
  - Voluntary panel used for methodological research
  - Panel members were recruited from HPS in July-Sept. 2024
- Research Panel Survey (RPS) – December 2024
  - A/B question testing
  - Using time-on-page paradata to assess burden of alternative question sequences
  - Use of digital payments and preferences for incentive payment formats
  - Etc.

# Motivation

- We noticed alias addresses among our RPS respondents!
- Are respondents who provided alias email addresses different from those who did not?



# Methods

- Identified RPS respondents with two types of alias addresses:
  1. Masked addresses (iCloud)
  2. Modified addresses (Gmail and others)
- Compared alias and non-alias respondents in HPS and RPS survey
  - Unit and item-level response rates
  - Email delivery outcomes
  - Demographic characteristics





# Limitations

- RPS is a voluntary survey
  - Small numbers of self-selected, motivated respondents
- Probably did not identify all alias emails
- Descriptive statistics only
- Also note:
  - Rounding rules

# Response differences

# RPS response rates and progress

		Complete** and partial responses		Average progress***
	N*	n*	%	%
Masked addresses	100	20	21.2%	82.1%
Modified addresses	70	30	42.4%	97.0%
Non-alias addresses	29,500	9,950	33.6%	92.6%

\*N's and frequencies are rounded.

\*\*Reached HH income question at end of survey.

\*\*\*Progress through survey as defined by Qualtrics.

# RPS item nonresponse and breakoffs

	n	Item NR (HH income)		Breakoffs	
		#	%	#	%
Masked addresses	20	0	n/a	<15	25.0%
Modified addresses	30	0	n/a	<15	3.6%
Non-alias addresses	9,950	100	1.0%	1,100	11.3%

# RPS invitation email delivery failures

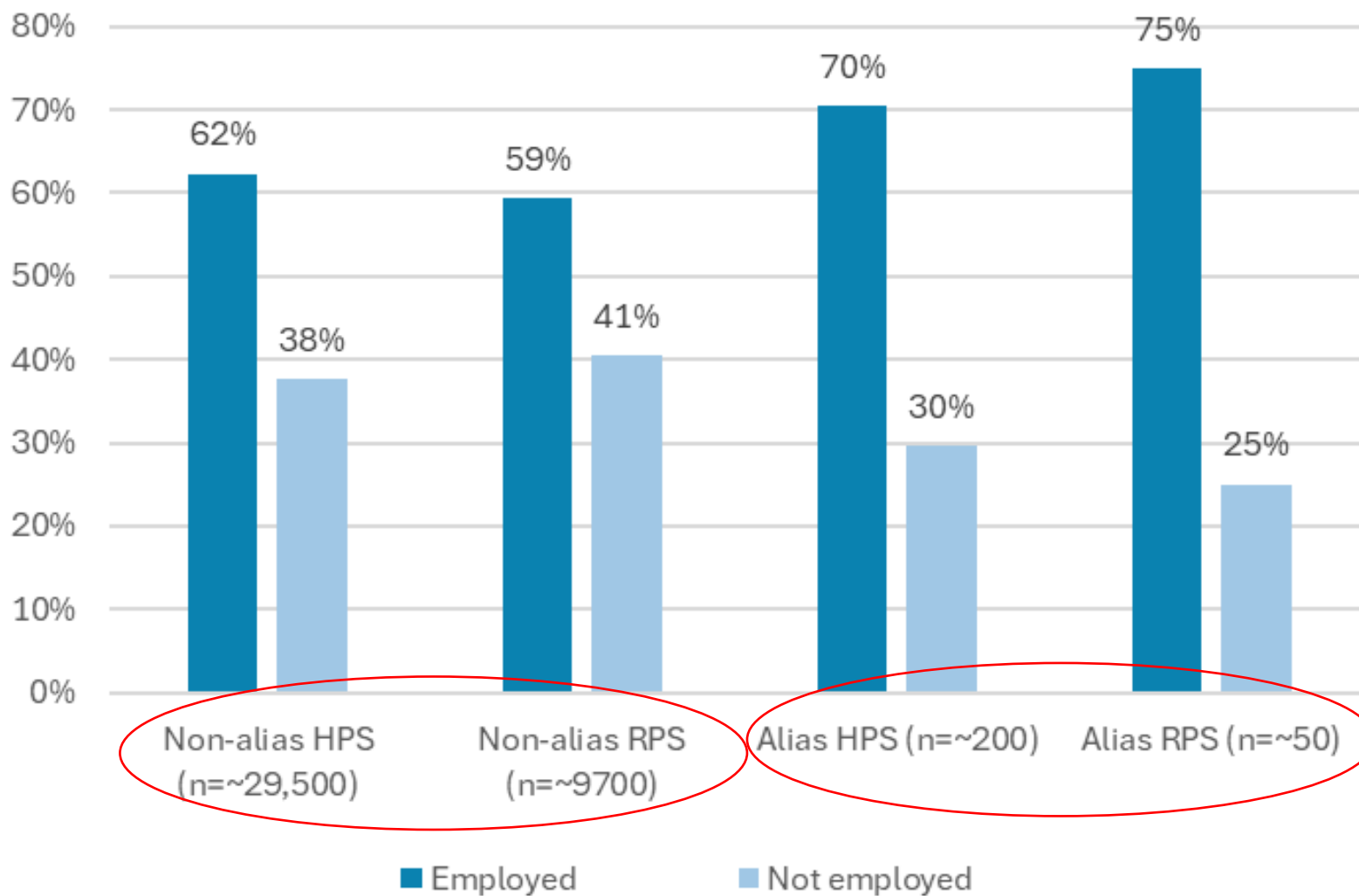
	Failures and bounce backs		
	N	n	%
Masked addresses	100	<15	0.9%
Modified addresses	70	<15	1.5%
Non-alias	29,500	550	1.8%

# Demographic differences

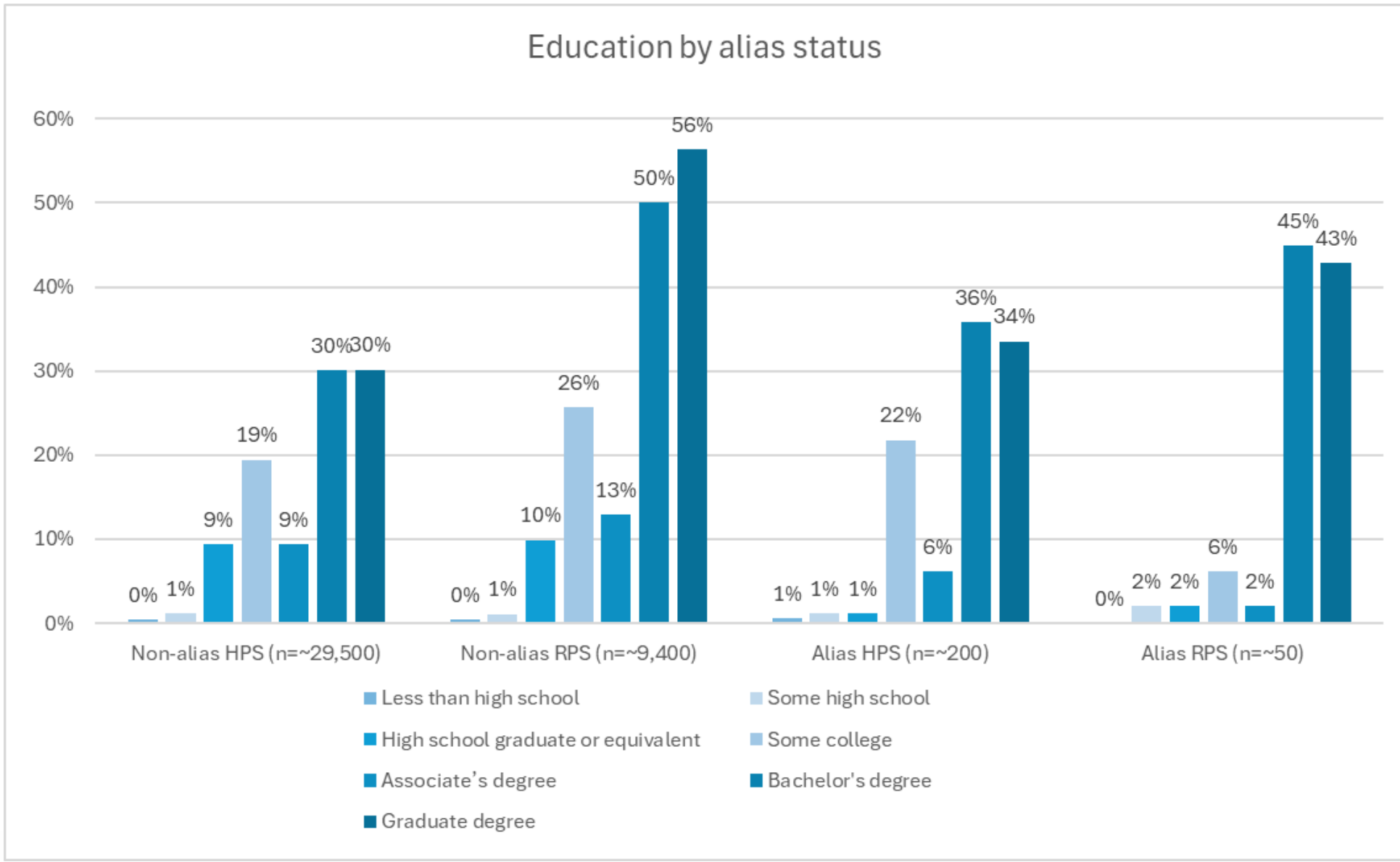
# Mean age by alias status in HPS and RPS

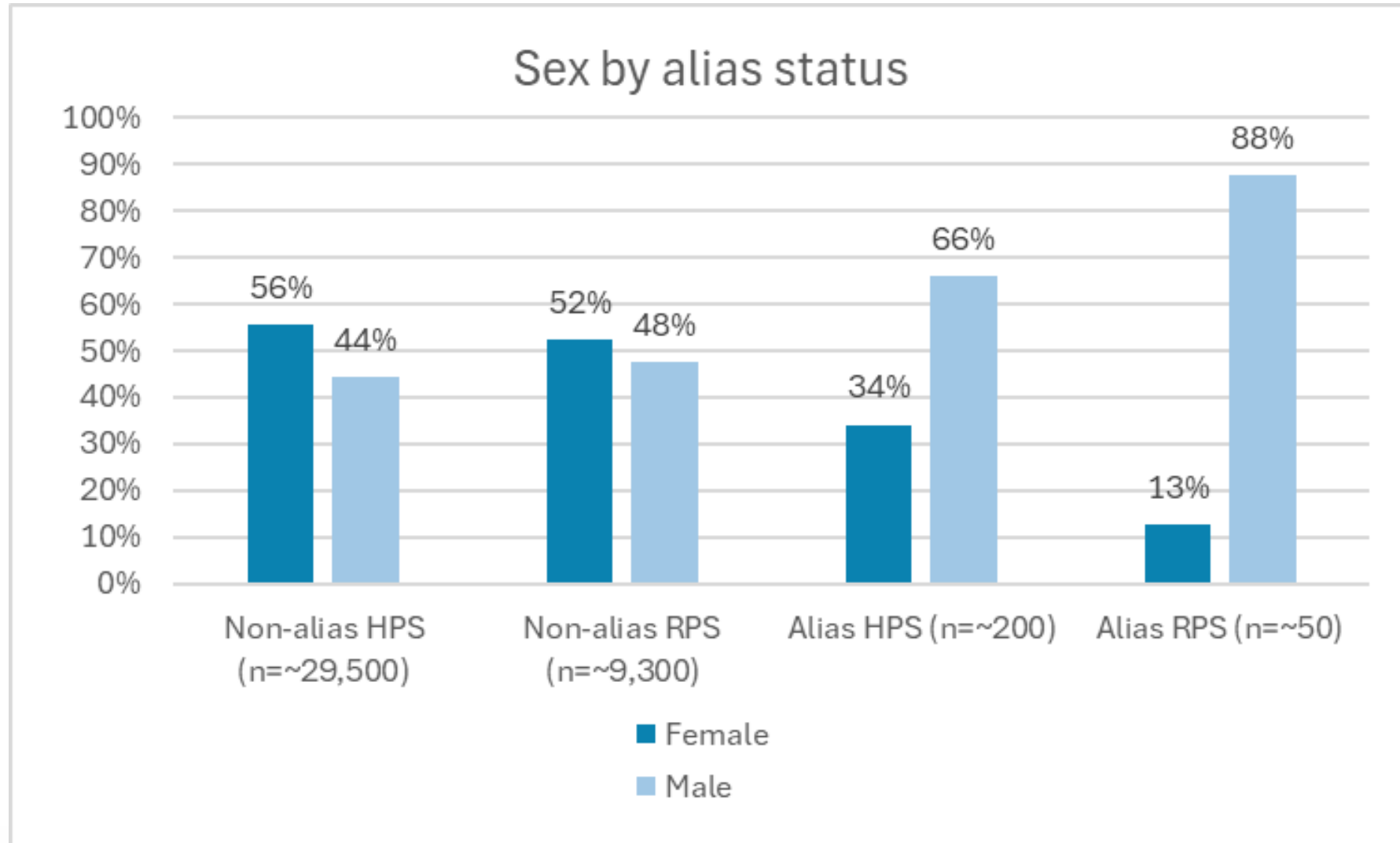
	Household Pulse Survey		Research Panel Survey	
	n	Mean age	n	Mean age
Masked address	100	52.2	20	56.9
Modified address	70	55.4	30	41.1
Non-alias	29,500	54.6	9,950	56.5

## Employment by alias status

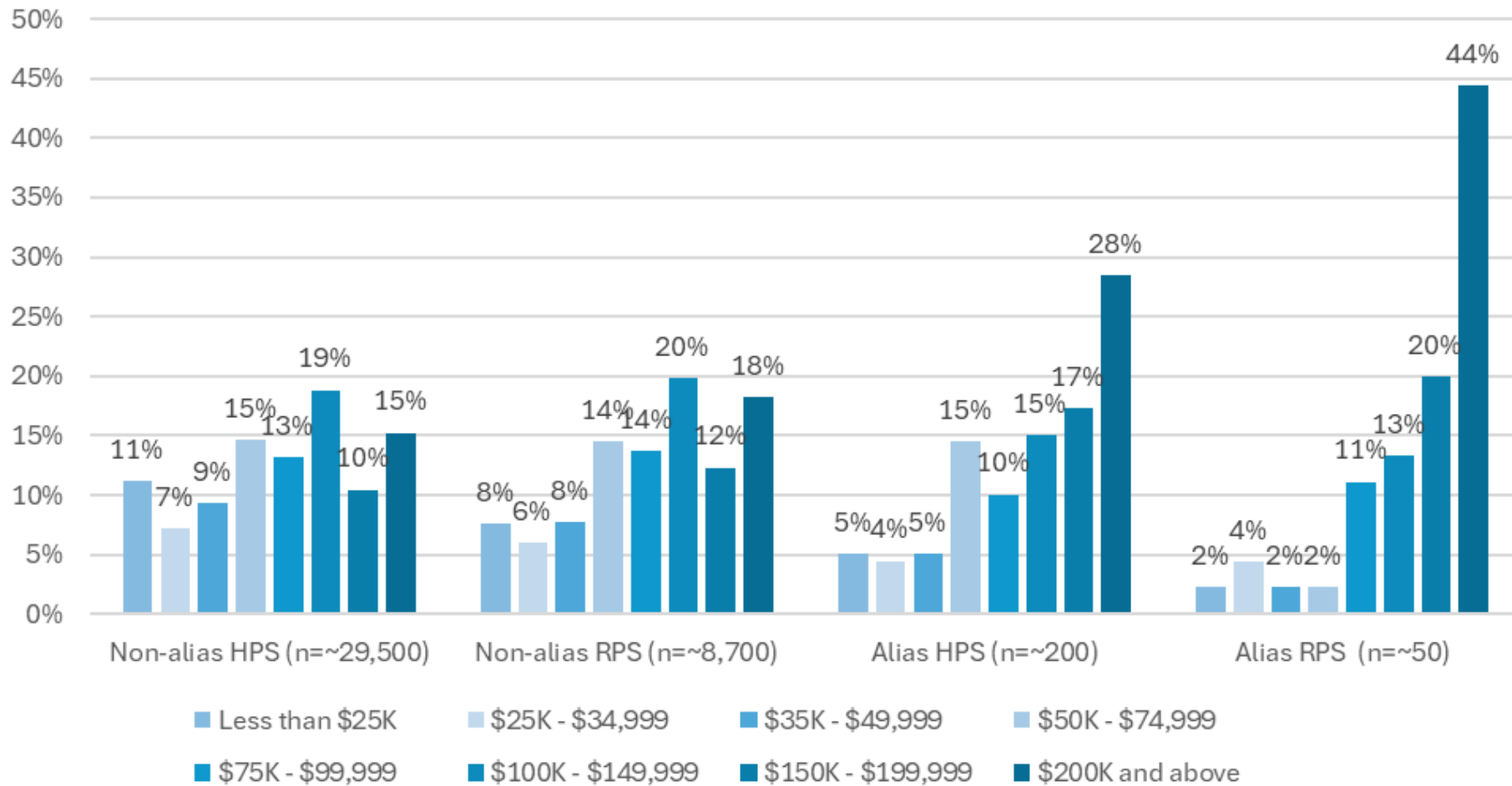




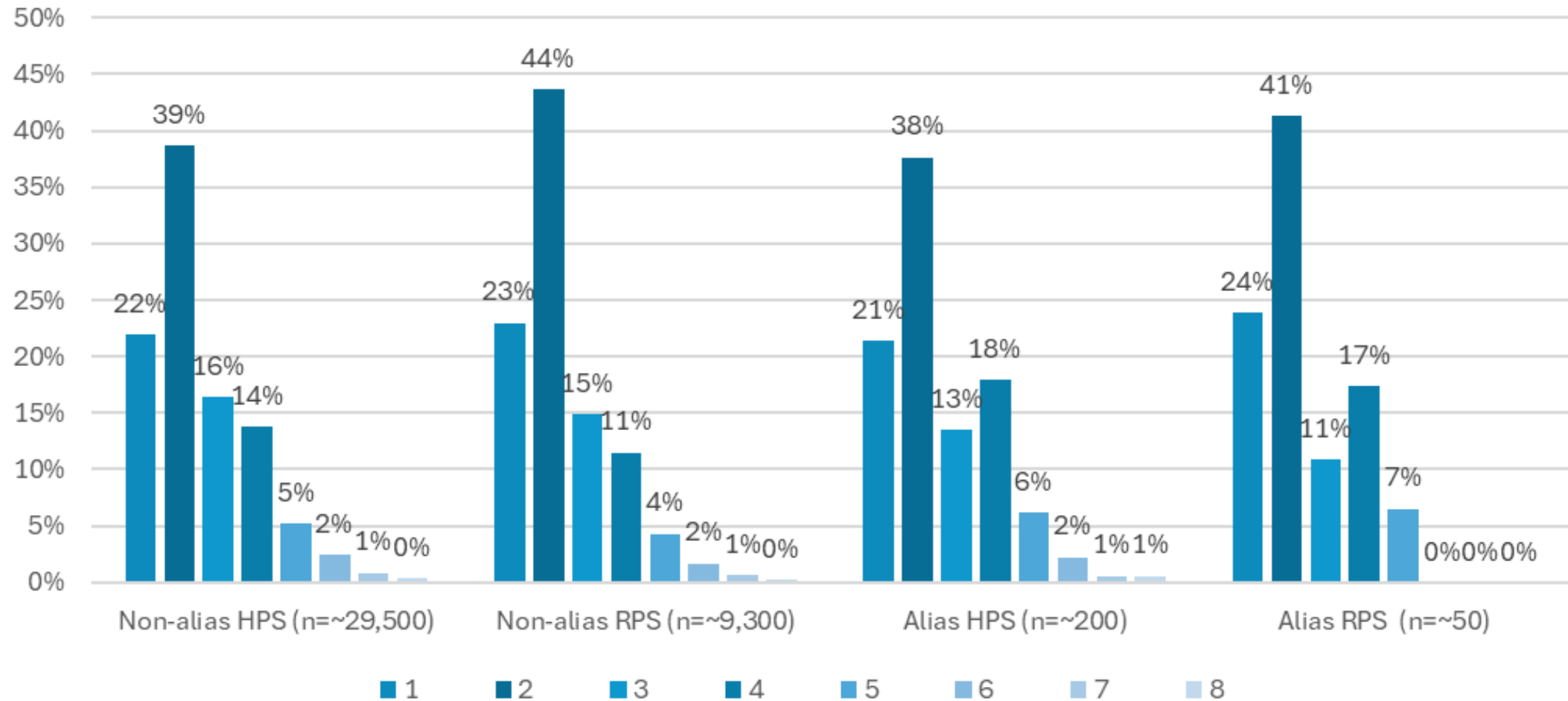




## Household income by alias status



## Household size by alias status



# Takeaways

- Overall, alias address users may be more likely to be male, higher educated, and higher income
- Masked address users may be less likely to respond\* but more likely to have reliable email addresses
  - \*Because privacy-sensitive?
- Modified address users may be more likely to respond, and younger



# Thanks!

Please direct questions or comments  
to:

Dave Tuttle

[alfred.d.tuttle@census.gov](mailto:alfred.d.tuttle@census.gov)

Casey Eggleston

[casey.m.eggleston@census.gov](mailto:casey.m.eggleston@census.gov)

